United Nations A/71/PV.18

General Assembly
Seventy-first session

Official Records

18th plenary meeting
Friday, 23 September 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

*President:* Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Bouah-Kamon (Côte d'Ivoire), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.*

**Address by Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Mali.

*Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Keita** (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by extending the hearty congratulations of the delegation of Mali to the President on his election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, and on his outstanding stewardship of our work. I would like to assure him of our full cooperation in those efforts. I would also like to acknowledge and commend the excellent work of his predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session.

We cannot but pay tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as he prepares to pass the torch after 10 years entirely dedicated to the cause of humankind. History will remember not only the Secretary-General's efforts to resolve many conflicts throughout the world, but also his personal involvement in the success of the summits on climate change and humanitarian action, the former having led to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. More particularly, I would like now, in this Hall, to thank the Secretary-General for his strong support of the Malian people and his laudable efforts in favour of peace and stability in my country and the Sahel region.

Peace and security are the conditions sine qua non of progress and development, to which we aspire on behalf of the peoples of the United Nations, whom we have the honour of representing here. With respect to Mali, one year ago, before the General Assembly, I presented the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process, which was signed in Bamako between the Government of Mali and the armed movements in the northern region of the country (see A/70/PV.15). Today, 15 months later, from this rostrum, I can assure the Assembly that hostilities have effectively ceased between the Government and the signatory movements. To date, significant progress has been made in the implementation of the Peace Agreement, which eloquently demonstrates my Government's will to honour its commitments and has generated tangible progress in all areas.

At regular intervals throughout the year, when the reports of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali are published, the Government of Mali has briefed the Security Council on its progress in the execution of the plan of action for implementing the Peace Agreement.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-29673 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

Among the initiatives and actions undertaken by the Government, I would particularly like to emphasize those related to political and institutional reforms, as well as to defence and security issues. Indeed, these issues and reforms are fundamental and have an impact on the rest of the process.

It is also important to note the following policy and institutional reforms: the appointment and swearing in of governors in the new regions of Taoudenni and Menaka, where delegated project-management agreements for construction and equipment for the two regions' general administration, in the amounts of $1.7 million and $1.36 million, respectively, were signed; and the enactment of the law establishing the interim administrations, which followed a modification of the law codifying territorial authorities and the adoption of a decree on modalities for swearing in interim administrations. In that connection, I would like to mention that the timetable for the swearing in of the interim authorities, developed by the Malian Government in cooperation with the groups and movements signatory to the Peace Agreement, was set for between 15 July and 25 August 2016. Unfortunately, due to ongoing insecurity and clashes among some armed groups, especially in Kidal, it was not possible to complete the process for the deadline. In that respect, I emphasize that the effective implementation of Security Council resolution 2295 (2016) will allow for the progressive recovery of Mali's sovereignty throughout its territory, thanks to implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

With respect to security and defence issues, the Government of Mali has established an institutional framework for reforming the security sector and for undertaking the process of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement (DDRR). In that context, among other things, the Government decided to take charge of the signatory groups' combatants prior to the launch of the DDRR process, with the attendant increase in the budget. The Government also created an operational coordination mechanism for vehicles for the purposes of setting up the first joint vehicle patrols. I hasten to note that, in addition to those measures, which aim to bring about a return to lasting peace and the restoration of State authority throughout the national territory, the Government has continued its development activities on the ground, in places where the security conditions allowed it, through the implementation of sector projects and programmes.

It should also be noted that the effective implementation of the Peace Agreement requires us to mobilize external resources to support national efforts. In that regard, I thank the partners that have honoured their financial commitments to Mali, and I would reiterate the call of my Government to the technical and financial partners to release the resources pledged at the international conference for the economic recovery and development of Mali, held in Paris on 22 October 2015.

Despite the efforts by the signatories to the Peace Agreement, the peace process still faces serious challenges related to the activities of terrorist groups in the northern regions that are indiscriminately expanding their asymmetrical attacks against peaceful civilians, the Malian defence and security forces, and the troops of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and of the French-led Operation Barkhane. I reiterate my gratitude to the Security Council for the adoption of resolution 2295 (2016), which renewed MINUSMA's mandate and authorized, inter alia, the adoption of a more proactive and robust posture so as to fulfil its stabilization mandate in Mali.

I call for strengthening the operational capabilities of the deployed troops in order to ensure the safety and security of MINUSMA personnel and apply the innovations set forth in resolution 2295 (2016) on the ground. I would also stress the need to accelerate the process of cantonment and DDRR, aimed at isolating the armed groups that are not signatories to the Peace Agreement that are affiliated with terrorist networks whose actions undermine ongoing efforts.

For its part, the Government of Mali will fully assume its responsibility under the new mandate. The Government is already working with MINUSMA to swiftly arrive at a shared vision of the implementation of the mandate by establishing measurable benchmarks. Accordingly, I welcome the agreement among all the stakeholders participating in high-level meeting on Mali held this morning concerning the importance of accelerating the implementation of the Peace Agreement, in particular the imperative of correcting the remaining gaps in MINUSMA's operational capabilities.

I cannot end this part of my address without expressing once again the sincere thanks and profound gratitude of the people of Mali for the United Nations and its Member States in providing multifaceted support for the peace process in Mali since January 2012. On

behalf of a grateful Malian nation, I would also like to pay tribute to the memory of all of the victims, both civilian and military, Malian and foreign, who have fallen on the field of honour in Mali in the defence of human dignity, freedom and democracy.

It is difficult to imagine the eradication of poverty and keeping our promise to leave no one behind in a context where armed conflict has become a new normal. The proliferation of attacks perpetrated around the world is a sufficient reminder that no country is immune to terrorism and that there is no cause that justifies deliberate violence against innocent civilians. Mali, which unfortunately continues to suffer the horrors of terrorism, encourages and joins Member States in their shared efforts to neutralize the hydra of terrorism and its avatars, including Da'esh, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Boko Haram, Ansar Eddine, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in Western Africa and Al-Mourabitoun, especially in the Middle East and Africa.

The Malian delegation welcomes the choice of the theme of this session — "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world". As the first session of the Assembly since the adoption of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the Heads of State and Government, the seventy-first session will undoubtedly allow us to take stock of a full year of efforts to implement the Agenda, by conducting a thorough analysis of the difficulties met with a view to finding the best ways and means to ensure the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs, which build on the success of the Millennium Development Goals, exhort us to go further and faster, if we want to put an end to all forms of poverty and change the lives of people in a substantial and inclusive manner by 2030.

We in Mali are convinced of the need to adopt strategies that strengthen economic growth and respond to the vital needs of the population, including combating climate change, protecting the environment and providing education, health care, social protection and jobs for young people, while also empowering women and ensuring their involvement and that of young people in the management of critical issues relating to the socioeconomic development of the country. In that context, we have adopted a law setting aside 30 per cent of elective positions for women. The adoption of that law will undoubtedly contribute to increasing the participation of women in national institutions. In addition to other equally important measures, the development of the strategic framework for economic recovery and sustainable development for the period 2016-2018 will serve, in the medium term, as the sole reference point for the design, implementation and monitoring of different development policies and strategies at a sectoral level.

Climate change is one of the major challenges affecting the survival and development of humankind. As a prime example of a country of the Sahel, Mali is bearing the brunt of the effects of climate change. That is why the delegation of Mali welcomes the strong commitment on the part of the international community in adopting and signing the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which marks a decisive turning point in the preservation of the environment. In that regard, I am particularly pleased to announce that this very morning Mali deposited its instruments of ratification for the Paris Agreement, the implementation of which I am convinced will contribute to saving our environment.

Now more than ever, it is high time that the recourse to weapons and deadly conflicts give way to the imperative of dialogue in order to establish lasting peace throughout the world. In Africa, despite the remarkable progress that has been made in the promotion of peace and security — particularly in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire — the fact remains that the situations in Libya and South Sudan continue to be of major concern. In the Middle East, we are following with the utmost concern the developments in the situations in Syria, Turkey and Iraq — and we reaffirm our strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

On the question of Palestine, which has been at the heart of United Nations concerns for more than 70 years, Mali reiterates its call for a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. I take this opportunity to reiterate that the people and the Government of Mali extend their solidarity and full support to their brother people in Palestine in their legitimate fight to exercise their inalienable right to sovereignty.

I would like to conclude by reminding the Assembly that it is our primary responsibility as world leaders to provide the necessary impetus to transform the planet and to ensure sustainable and inclusive development for future generations so as to safeguard them from the scourge of war and misery. Millions of men, women

and children are impatiently waiting for us, scanning the horizon with hope. We have no right to disappoint them. To that end, Mali is determined to play its role to the full extent of its abilities. Long live the United Nations at the service of a world for peace and justice.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Mali for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Agenda item 8** *(continued)*

**General debate**

**Address by Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana.

*Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Masisi** (Botswana): On behalf of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana, Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama, allow me to join previous speakers in congratulating His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I also pay homage to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft.

My delegation fully endorses the pertinent choice of theme for this session, namely, "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world". We are aware of the need for and importance of reviewing, monitoring and evaluating the progress made in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals over the next 15 years, which has been one of the main lessons learned from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

Botswana has long recognized that, in order to achieve sustainable development, there must be national ownership. It must be based on inclusive, accountable, democratic and strong institutions and processes. For Botswana, adherence to those principles, together with the judicious exploitation of natural resources and international development support, has enabled us to achieve what we have achieved in the 50 years since our independence.

In a week, on 30 September, Botswana will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary of independence. I would once again like to remind the Assembly that in 1966 we were among the poorest nations of the world, with a gross domestic product per capita of approximately $70. Since then we have managed to attain middle-income status.

When we, like the rest of Africa, told the world that we were ready for self-governance, many sceptics, historians and commentators — including many in Africa — thought of us as a basket case that was neither ready for, nor capable of, real independence. In fact, on 28 September 1966, two days before we joined the community of sovereign nations, one cynical Canadian journalist, a certain Mr. Charles King of the Southern News Service, wrote an article entitled "Bechuanaland Poor, Hungry Desert Land, Independence to Come Friday", observing that

> "The new blue, white and black flags are flying everywhere in Gaberones, its incongruous capital city. But elsewhere in the vast, trackless wasteland that will take the name of Botswana there is little to celebrate."

He continued:

> "Two years of disastrous drought and crop failure have brought havoc and hunger to its widely scattered agricultural inhabitants. More than one fifth of the population is literally being kept alive by emergency feeding, and the numbers are rapidly increasing ...
>
> "It also has debts and economic misery. It is destined to be an international charity case forever, exporting its ablest men and its cattle in exchange for cash and kindness from abroad."

With about 3 kilometres of paved roads in the entire country, with 42 graduates, a few primary schools, a single railway line, operated by neighbouring hostile and white-minority-ruled then-Rhodesia, and one national radio station, which broadcast for two hours a

day, ours is a country born out of humble beginnings, from which we managed our own development. Having joined the United Nations in 1966, together with Lesotho, Guyana and Barbados, we are proud and contented to look back on the experiment we started and see that it was well worth the try. From next to nothing, we placed a high premium on building a united, democratic and accountable nation premised on respect for democracy, human rights, the rule of law and strong institutions.

Conscious of the prevailing circumstances and challenges, we chose to base the development of our society on four key national development principles, that is, democracy, development, unity and self-reliance. As we reflect on our challenges and the modest achievements that we have made, we are proud of the fact that we are among Africa's most stable democracies, having held free, fair and peaceful multiparty elections every five years without interruption. It is our every intention to continue along that path.

In celebrating 50 years of independent nationhood, we are conscious of the fact that we could not have achieved all those milestones without the much-needed support and solidarity of the international community. For that we shall forever remain grateful to our reliable global partners, who have stood with us throughout the challenging journey. We have today made great strides and achievements in the areas of education, health care, infrastructure and human-resource development, as well as women and youth empowerment. Those achievements, however, should not make us complacent.

Like many nations, Botswana is already feeling the adverse impact of climate change. Such impact is manifested in a decline in agricultural production, rising food insecurity and increasing water stress, all of which are projected to worsen with time. The threat must not be underestimated. Urgent and effective global action on climate change, mitigation and adaptation is required to avoid the catastrophic consequences of global warming. The seventy-first session of the General Assembly provides a strategic opportunity for injecting much needed-political momentum into the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which this organ unanimously adopted exactly one year ago.

The recent high-level event on large movements of refugees and migrants, held just a few days ago, is a stark reminder of the challenges we continue to face as a planet. While we commend all States that take on the burden of receiving displaced people, that is not the only answer. More effort should be put into addressing the problem and finding solutions in the countries from which they come. Clearly, the current situation of receiving such people serves only to encourage others to follow their predecessors.

As a member of the community of nations that cherishes freedom, peace and the fulfilment and enjoyment of life, Botswana remains deeply concerned about the many acts of terror, conflict and human suffering that have precipitated the vast and large displacement of people across the globe. In that regard, we are concerned about the protracted Syrian crisis, which could have been contained had the Security Council and the international community intervened promptly. History will judge us harshly, for we have allowed the situation to degenerate into what it is today. However, we are well aware that Al-Assad, as well as his system, which slaughters the innocent, is not the only party committing crimes against humanity.

We are equally concerned about, and strongly condemn, the continued blatant contravention of international law and United Nations resolutions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea through its callous testing of ballistic missiles. To demonstrate our abhorrence, Botswana terminated its diplomatic relations with that rogue State. In fact, in our opinion, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Syria do not deserve membership of this world body, owing to their lack of respect for, and adherence to, the values and principles that they committed to uphold.

As a community of nations bound by universal ideals and a shared moral ethos, it would be a dereliction of our responsibilities if we did not hold one another accountable in the event of breaches of the very fundamental values of human rights that the Organization is committed to uphold. In the light of the increasing security threats, we call upon the Security Council, as the organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security, to demonstrate seriousness in executing that important mandate. It can no longer be acceptable to hide behind the veto while millions of innocent lives are lost.

We continue to express our sympathies to those afflicted by disasters such as earthquakes, floods and other natural calamities. We extend our condolences to the families of all those who lost their lives in the past year. In that regard, we wish to commend civil society for its tireless efforts in providing humanitarian aid

to those in dire need. In the same vein, we reiterate our long-held belief, which is shared by many, and in line with the hallowed principle of the responsibility to protect, that States have the primary responsibility to protect their own populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. We commend human rights organizations' work in exposing such violations wherever they occur in the world.

As a staunch supporter of the International Criminal Court, we stand by all efforts to fight impunity and strengthen the international criminal justice system in order to bring justice to the victims of such crimes. We urge all States signatories of the Rome Statute to uphold their commitments.

It is crucial that we step up our efforts in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in order to effectively protect women and children in armed conflict and involve them at all levels and processes of mediation, peacekeeping, peace maintenance, reconstruction and development, given the fact that they suffer most from the effects of armed conflict. As a peace-loving nation, Botswana reaffirms its abiding faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the various multilateral instruments under international humanitarian law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Let me conclude by commending Brazil for hosting a successful Olympic Games despite criticisms in some quarters that predicted failure while disseminating messages of fear linking the Games with the issues of, inter alia, the zika virus and terrorism. In a related matter, we strongly condemn the International Paralympic Committee for its blanket ban of Russian athletes. Botswana does not condone doping in any way, but to punish clean athletes is discrimination. Those who participate in the Paralympic Games are disabled, and the Games are a way of including them in the mainstream and helping them overcome their challenges. For a body that was set up specifically to show compassion and caring to treat people like that is indeed a gross injustice. We believe that there is an agenda beyond its stated reasons for doing so.

I wish to reaffirm Botswana's continued commitment to playing its full part in the quest for international peace and security, as well as to the international community's unrelenting efforts to make the world a safer and more prosperous place for both present and future generations.

Finally, as we are in the United States of America, we wish the people of America successful elections in November. We hope that the person who emerges victorious will be someone who is known to be tolerant and who embraces all people. Allow me, in the same breath, to return in equal measure the accolades extended to us by President Obama. We in Botswana fully recognize, remain confident in and exalt the leadership of President Obama. These indeed have been eight glorious years — the best years for the United States of America and Africa by any measure. We wish him well and a well-deserved retirement.

In the spirit of the Charter, and as inspired by the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, let us push to transform our world and leave no one behind.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted from the rostrum.*

### Address by Mr. Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia.

*Mr. Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Kalla** (Indonesia): I wish to congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. He may rest assured of Indonesia's commitment to contributing to his successful tenure at the helm of the General Assembly.

The theme of the general debate — "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our

world" — is appropriate as we move forward with our shared commitment to maintaining and building on the momentum that we achieved last year. Indonesia attaches great priority to the issue of development, particularly sustainable development. Through the commitments and the setting of global targets in the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), the world has made considerable progress in achieving development for all. The MDGs have been an important guide for countries to eradicate poverty. The time frame for their realization added a much-needed sense of urgency for the global community.

Today we have a new set of global goals and time frames. The transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a comprehensive global framework for sustainable development for us at the national level and for the international community to act as one. The issues the Agenda addresses are broader than those covered by the MDGs. The Agenda reflects the challenges faced by countries at a national level, while simultaneously committing the international community to addressing global challenges.

Indonesia is fully committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda. We have taken concrete measures such as mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into our national development plan; finalizing legal and institutional frameworks for national implementation, while engaging all stakeholders, including local Governments, academia, civil-society and philanthropic organizations; and developing national and sub-national action plan guidelines, the SDGs database and monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms.

However, the implementation of the MDGs had taught us an important lesson, namely, that national commitments need to be complemented by strong and robust international cooperation. In that regard, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda must be supported by organizing a strong global partnership, one that makes a transformative difference to the efforts to advance sustainable development. The global community must also provide sufficient means for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Such means include stable and predictable funding mechanisms and innovative approaches for financing development.

If we are to achieve our 2030 Agenda, we need an enabling environment. I am sure that we are all familiar with the phrase "peace is a prerequisite for development". Basically, the phrase means that without peace, security and stability there can be no development. From our experience in the 1950s and 1960s, Indonesia can attest to the statement's veracity. Internal conflict and regional strife with our neighbours turned Indonesia's focus away from development.

Today we are seeing much of the same in many parts of the world. A lack of peace, security and stability have resulted in far too many of our brothers and sisters having to struggle for their basic survival, sometimes in unimaginable and inhumane conditions. Increased tension between countries and unresolved territorial disputes, if left unrestrained, all increase the risk of open conflicts.

Real and constant threats from terrorism, extremism and radicalism continue to haunt us. A divisive "us versus them" mindset is giving rise to racial prejudice, stigmatization and religious intolerance. The long list of non-traditional challenges that profoundly affect humankind continues to grow, ranging from illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing to drug trafficking, and from people smuggling and trafficking to cybercrime.

In addition, we continue to helplessly watch the suffering of the Palestinian people. Despite the overwhelming support for a two-State solution, the Middle East peace process remains resistant to moving into gear. Unprecedented humanitarian challenges, such as the phenomenon of refugees and irregular migration, resulting from the situation in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and other parts of the world, continue. Almost daily, we must confront a 24-hour news cycle, with the networks presenting us with images of world's stark reality — the blood, tears and vacant stares of the most vulnerable, our children.

All of that is taking place against the backdrop of a slowing global economy. The World Bank has downgraded the global economic growth forecast from 2.9 per cent to 2.4 per cent. The gap between rich and poor is increasingly widening. At the same time, environmental degradation and climate change continue to accelerate, directly affecting island States and the most vulnerable countries.

All those critical challenges must be seen for what they are — global and massive challenges. In the face of these great challenges, it is our commitment and our efforts that will prevail. No one country or region alone can resolve these challenges. What we need

are global solutions, global partnerships and global solidarity. More than ever before, we need the United Nations — an Organization that is at the centre of our global governance, an Organization that is transparent, effective, accountable, efficient and representative.

In that regard, United Nations reform is key to making the Organization stronger and more relevant to confronting the challenges and reality of the twenty-first century, and to eliminating the silo mentality that characterizes the way in which the Secretariat carries out its work. There have been too many important players left out of the United Nations decision-making processes, too many instances where the principles of democracy are put aside. Too often the decisions made at the United Nations differ from what is needed on the ground. We need to mainstream the SDGs and their related targets, as well as such universal principles as human rights, in all activities and work of the committees, agencies and related bodies within the United Nations system. Most important, Member States must also adapt to the new realities and challenges facing the Organization. We need to embrace new methods of work that would safeguard such important targets as the successful implementation of the SDGs.

Indonesia is a true advocate of multilateralism. It is inherent in our DNA, in the founding of our nation and in our Constitution. We are a nation with the world's fourth-largest population and its largest Muslim population. We are also the world's third-largest democracy. Ours is a country where democracy, Islam, modernity and the empowerment of women go hand in hand. We are at the forefront of promoting democracy, tolerance, pluralism and peace.

Our nation is made up of thousands of islands, both large and small, and therefore we fully understand the impacts of climate change. Most important, ours is a nation that respects and fully adheres to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations in its foreign relations. Those traits have allowed Indonesia to play a contributing role in various United Nations collective efforts.

In the areas of peace and security, Indonesia remains steadfastly committed to increasing its contribution to United Nations peacekeeping, with a target of providing 4,000 personnel by 2019. Our "Roadmap Vision 4,000 Peacekeepers" initiative has motivated us to work unflaggingly to strengthen United Nations peacekeeping operations, while we remain mindful of the fact that contributions to peacekeeping operations are not merely about numbers. Indonesia's cooperation and efforts in countering terrorism have also been enhanced both regionally and globally.

We continue to demonstrate our pioneering role in combating climate change through mitigation and adaptation efforts and in addressing ocean and maritime issues. We signed the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and are on schedule to conclude the ratification process in due course. Indonesia is also committed to the global efforts to promote and protect human rights. At the regional level, we continue to maintain stability and prosperity through active regional cooperation, as demonstrated by our participation in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as well as through knowledge-sharing in our South-South and triangular cooperation.

Against that backdrop, allow me to take this opportunity to announce Indonesia's candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2019-2020. Indonesia's practices, commitment and contribution to the United Nations make it a true partner for world peace. Indonesia recognizes that our journey to 2030 may not always be smooth sailing. Addressing the realities of our world today cannot wait for perfect conditions. We must strengthen our commitment to ramping up concrete efforts aimed at creating an environment conducive to widespread progress, thereby ensuring a better tomorrow.

Lasting peace is not merely a goal — it is the determining factor for meaningful development. Indonesia remains steadfast in its commitment to being at the forefront of global partnerships for world peace and prosperity for all. We will always endeavour to spearhead efforts to work together towards creating a stronger, more representative and democratic United Nations.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Taban Deng Gai, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan.

*Mr. Taban Deng Gai, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Taban Deng Gai, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Gai** (South Sudan): I bring to the General Assembly greetings from my President, General Salva Kiir Mayardit, President of the Republic of South Sudan, who would have loved to be here but who, owing to other national commitments, has asked me to represent him at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly. Allow me to congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I also want to commend his predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for a job well done.

More important, I wish to pay tribute and extend my appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his global achievements and for his interest in, and attention to, South Sudan. In my culture, a white bull is a symbol of peace. South Sudanese President Salva Kiir Mayardit once gave His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon a white bull as a gesture of peace. The bull has now grown enough to be ready for delivery to the Secretary-General, to whom we wish all the best in his future endeavours.

Every year we try to remind ourselves of the cardinal principle of global peace. Although the theme of this year's debate is "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world", we still understand that without peace we will not be able to achieve that noble objective. Indeed, we need to transform our world in order to collectively and specifically respond to the many challenges that we are facing today. Bringing human suffering to an end and ensuring that human dignity for all is achieved and respected around the world are noble goals that we must all strive to attain.

My country, South Sudan, which was admitted to the General Assembly five years ago, in July 2011, has once again descended into conflict. Today South Sudan has been struck by civil war because we, the leaders of the country, have failed to agree on how to address the internal challenges of governance and leadership within our political party, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). After nearly two years of protracted fighting, we were able to reach a decision and sign the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, in August 2015, which we are currently and steadily implementing, with support from our region's regional body, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), as well as the African Union (AU), the Troika countries — the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Norway — the European Union (EU), China and the rest of the world.

However, in the course of implementing the Agreement, one of our leaders, the former Chairman of the Sudan People's Liberation Army-In Opposition (SPLA-IO), triggered renewed fighting on 7 to 11 July, which brought about new instability. This time the fighting took place inside the presidential palace itself, with the primary objective of taking power by force. Fortunately, the SPLA-IO forces were defeated in the ensuing battles, and their leader decided to flee from Juba and abandon the process of implementing the August 2015 peace agreement signed in Addis Ababa. This man has resorted to fighting the very Government he served as first Vice-President.

After this departure, our party, the SPLA-IO, which is the leading party to the agreement, met and agreed to replace him as a leader of SPLA-In Opposition. The official leadership of the SPLA-IO took that decision after having established that the position of the first Vice-President was vacant and that it was not an option for the country and the people to go back to war. It took this decision in order to allow peace and stability to prevail in the country, as well as for the SPLA-IO to have a partner in the implementation of the peace agreement. To that end, a new leader for SPLA-IO was elected. Accordingly, I am here representing my country as its first Vice-President. We are determined this time — more than before — to move our country forward in peace and development with a view to averting the suffering of our people.

At this point, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the United Nations for the humanitarian assistance it has rendered, and continues to render, to our people. I would like also to thank IGAD, the AU, the troika, the United Nations, the EU and China for

their tireless efforts in ensuring that an agreement was reached to end the conflict and return South Sudan to a peaceful and stable path.

At the moment, I can report to the members of the Assembly with confidence that the situation in my country is stable and peaceful, my Government is functioning and life is returning to normal. The Transitional National Legislative Assembly is operational. Furthermore, it has been reconstituted and is continuing with its work, and cantonment areas for armies have been established. However, the effect of the conflict, coupled with the low global oil prices, has put our economy under unprecedented fiscal stress, thus creating hardship for the general public. Nevertheless, together with our development partners and friends, we are making every effort to address the economic shocks by stabilizing the security situation, streamlining our fiscal policies, improving income from non-oil revenue, engaging in agricultural, mining, tourism, including ecotourism, activities, and encouraging investors to come to South Sudan.

Another important milestone is that South Sudan and the Sudan are now moving quickly to ensure the reconciliation of the two States and that their relations are normalized, so that the two States are able to better serve their citizens. There shall be no more harbouring of negative forces from either country. The Sudan and South Sudan are also working closely with other countries in our region — especially Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda — to realize the vision of sustainable development by building infrastructure, such as power grids and roads, in order to improve the lives of citizens.

More often than not, we have taken decisions individually, and sometimes collectively, to try to address such situations as preventing a country from slipping into conflict, while urging reforms and democratization, promoting respect for human rights and so on. But sometimes the results of such actions may actually contribute to the very things we were trying to avoid in the first place.

Some leaders who may not agree with those efforts assert that those actions are unhelpful. The point I am trying to make in this regard is that efforts in some of our countries, which we are taken with the supposed intention of protecting civilians, advancing democracy and promoting respect for human rights and justice, have not always produced the intended results. Rather, in most cases, we end up causing displacement and refugees. I have the inclination to believe that our problem as a global Organization is that we have in many cases failed or refused to listen to views from the countries whose peoples' lives we want to improve.

The universal push to transform the world through the Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved without us listening to one another — whether we are large nations or small, whether we are rich countries or poor, developed nations or developing ones, like mine, South Sudan. What happens in one part of the world affects other parts of the world. Therefore, it is imperative that we work together to resolve critical issues that affect our planet, such as, inter alia, terrorism, conflicts, migration, climate change, nuclear proliferation, racism and food insecurity. These issues require collective and cooperative action if we are to make the world a better place for all of us. If we want to transform our world, then all of us must be made to feel that we all belong to it, as a matter of right and obligation, and we must work as true partners in its transformation. The attitudes of superiority and patronage, disguised as promoting democracy, human rights and freedom and justice, can easily lead to serious crises in the form of resistance from affected parties.

We in South Sudan believe in dialogue and respect for each other as we engage in resolving problems. And as the Security Council continues to strive to maintain world peace and order, as provided for in Articles 23 and 24 of the Charter of the United Nations, we in South Sudan want to be active participants in the achievement of these noble goals. We want peace in South Sudan and the world at large, not only for the present generation but also for future generations. Our actions as individual countries or as States Members of the United Nations should therefore be seen to promote peace, and not create more conflicts. In our recent history, our actions have created more suffering than it has solved problems. That should not be the case if we want to be true to the ideals and principles set forth in the United Nations Charter.

I want to assure the Assembly that our Government has consented to Security Council resolution 2304 (2016). The resolution's implementation is being discussed by the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), the South Sudanese Transitional Government of National Unity and other countries in the region. My Government's position is that we have to engage more with the United Nations on the details of the resolution's implementation in order

to avoid derailing national healing and reconciliation. External intervention often negatively affects internal reconciliation. The tasks of the Regional Protection Force can be advanced through collaboration and cooperation with the Transitional Government.

Last but not least, the Republic of South Sudan will cooperate with UNMISS, regional bodies, IGAD, the East African Community, the AU, the troika, the EU and all of our friends in our journey towards recovery from the tragedy that befell us. We promise to bring peace and justice and to rebuild strong and credible institutions in our country. It is our plan to move the country forward on its major development projects — roads and bridges, new cities, power grids, education and health — and in modernizing agriculture, so that we can feed our people. We are going to commit our endowed resources of oil, minerals, human capital and others to the development of the youngest nation in the world. We call upon our partners for support, cooperation, consultation and dialogue as we partner together in transforming our world through the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Taban Deng Gai, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, was escorted from the rostrum.*

### Address by Mr. Moisés Omar Halleslevens Acevedo, Vice-President of the Republic of Nicaragua

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice President of the Republic of Nicaragua.

*Mr. Moisés Omar Halleslevens Acevedo, Vice-President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Moisés Omar Halleslevens Acevedo, Vice-President of the Republic of Nicaragua, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Acevedo** (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): I bring greetings from the people of Nicaragua and from our President, Comandante Daniel Ortega Saavedra. We are very pleased to see a brother from Fiji, a Pacific island State, preside over the General Assembly for the very first time. He can count on Nicaragua's support.

A year ago, the international community agreed to launch the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which offers us a historic opportunity to transform our planet and fight for a just world order so that together, in peace, solidarity and complementarity, we may advocate for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Endemic poverty and inequality have become more noticeable than ever in developing and developed countries alike, especially in vulnerable and marginalized groups, including peoples living under colonial occupation and foreign intervention. It is urgent that we eradicate colonialism and end military interventions and aggressions in order to fully realize the right of our peoples to self-determination and development.

The right to development is a right of all. The international community has yet to answer for the millions of human beings to whom that right remains a dream. Developed countries must comply once and for all with their commitments regarding official development assistance by providing additional, predictable and sufficient financial resources. Nicaragua recognizes the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to social justice based on respect for human rights, including the right to development.

Much has been said in recent days about climate change. The World Meteorological Organization projects that 2016 is heading towards breaking all temperature records since records have been kept, which makes it clear that the agreements reached at the twenty-first session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) in Paris failed to establish a firm starting point to address the greatest challenge facing the planet. The voluntary, non-binding formula will lead to an increase in global temperature of 3°C or more, which will have catastrophic effects on highly vulnerable countries.

Many of us feel that what was agreed in Paris is not sufficient ,and we urge more ambitious actions. We note with great concern the worldwide record temperatures and little ambition to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, which corroborates Nicaragua position's at COP21. Nicaragua, adhering to international law and taking into account the principle of damage recovery, has

demanded a global compensation policy in order to address that phenomenon.

We take this opportunity to reiterate our support for the just aspirations of the Republic of China on Taiwan for greater participation in United Nations specialized agencies, in accordance with the demands and needs of that brotherly nation of 23 million inhabitants, which should not be excluded from the Organization.

We in Latin America and the Caribbean have reiterated our desire to assert ourselves as a zone of peace and fair development in order to achieve firm and lasting peace and social justice through dialogue and understanding. We are pleased at and welcome the restoration of relations between Cuba and the United States of America. However, it is disappointing to note the intensification of measures that maintain the cruel, inhuman and criminal economic, financial and commercial blockade against Cuba.

We reiterate our congratulations to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on having recently assumed the leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement. In that vein, we offer our full support to President Nicolas Maduro Moros and his legitimate Government, which continues to be the victim of aggression, assault and destabilizing policies from the exterior, coordinated with anti-democratic and oligarchic sectors from the past.

We once again hail the signing of the peace agreements in Colombia between the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, and offer our best wishes for the peace agreements to prevail and be implemented.

Puerto Rico is Latin American and Caribbean. We demand that the colonial Power resolve this situation through dialogue and negotiation. We call on the United States of America to release the Puerto Rican patriot Oscar López Rivera as a humanitarian gesture.

We express our solidarity and support for the legitimate rights of the Argentine Republic in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands, South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The United Kingdom must immediately comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions and resume direct negotiations with Argentina.

We reiterate our solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just struggle for an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We demand the immediate return of all Arab and Palestinian territories currently occupied by Israel.

We welcome and resolve to maintain our solidarity with the people of Western Sahara in their fight under the leadership of the Polisario Front.

We reiterate our full solidarity with the Government and people of Syria in their fight against international terrorism in defence of their sovereignty and territorial integrity. We stress the need for a political solution negotiated among Syrians and an end to foreign intervention, including the funding and delivery of weapons to terrorist groups. It has pained us to witness the proliferation of terrorist attacks against peoples and Governments. We condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Nicaragua will always promote its policy of peace, unity and understanding among nations, for political and negotiated solutions to conflicts and for the right of our peoples to achieve sustainable development and well-being. As current holder of the presidency pro tempore of the Central American Integration System, we are reinforcing our integration in all fields and working together to combat the scourge of drug trafficking and organized crime. Together with El Salvador and Honduras, we are striving to make the Gulf of Fonseca a zone of peace and development.

We highlight the need to eradicate threats to civic security and social order in our region with a strong and coordinated strategy against organized crime and its ramifications. In Nicaragua, our policies are focused on the human individual and the Nicaraguan family. Our people are ratifying their confidence in our socialist Christian model of solidarity, which ensures that our lives continue to improve in a safe and stable manner, in growth and in peace with our people as principal actors. Through good governance, we have prioritized economic growth, job growth, the reduction of poverty and inequality, the strengthening of gender equality and macroeconomic stability in sovereignity and security in harmony with the Earth.

Nicaragua has been recognized by the World Economic Forum as one of the most successful countries in terms of gender equality and as the safest country in Central America and one of the safest in Latin America. As one of the three safest countries for investment, we have sustained economic growth of approximately 5 per cent of our gross domestic product

in the past five years. We have achieved this success through a model of partnership, dialogue and consensus under the leadership of our Government, working with the private sector and the workers themselves.

We reject the proposals and initiatives put forth by the House of Representatives and Senate of the United States, as they constitute violations of international law and a breach of the Charter of the United Nations. Those legislative bodies have been involved in interventionist policy throughout history and interfered in our own sovereign political, economic and social processes. This interference is notably more intense in the election season.

We in Nicaragua shall continue to strengthen peace, stability, governability and progress through such unprecedented proposals as our model of partnership, dialogue and consensus, which enjoys constitutional status and has helped us to mobilize the economy and achieve important progress in the fight against poverty. The National Reconciliation and Unity Government reiterates its firm commitment to this model, which unites us around the common good and reaffirms our unwavering commitment to peace, security, tranquility and democracy. In the weeks prior to our general elections, our people have demonstrated their support with high approval ratings and willingness to participate in the elections of 6 November with confidence and hope.

Nicaragua will continue to fight for a better world of values, where human beings strive for a sustainable, just, equitative, safe and sovereign development; and where the advances of science and technology, reflected in all areas of our lives, are accessible and shared by all. We will be able to make our world a better one only once we ourselves assume, along with family and society, a steadfast commitment to peace and equality among nations and their respective societies.

I conclude by declaring my hope that peace may prevail.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Nicaragua for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Moisés Omar Halleslevens Acevedo, Vice-President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted from the rostrum.*

## Address by Mr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

*Mr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Sisoulith** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*spoke in Lao; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): First, on behalf of the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, I extend my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. It is my firm belief that, with his wealth of experience, he will guide this session of the General Assembly with great success. We stand ready to offer him our full support and cooperation in the discharge of his noble duties.

My profound congratulations also go to His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft on the successful completion of his duties as President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session.

I also take this opportunity to commend His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his active and tireless efforts to fulfil the United Nations mission and objectives on many fronts over the past decade.

The international community remains concerned about various challenges and developments in many regions of the world. To name but a few, terrorism and extremism remain a threat to regional and global peace and security; more than 800 million people all over the world still live in extreme poverty; while natural disasters and climate change have inflicted tremendous damage on social and economic development in various parts of the world. At the same time, the global economy is still fragile and growing only slowly.

Against that backdrop, in recent years the international community has made collective efforts to respond to and address those challenges by

adopting various measures and mechanisms, including cooperation frameworks such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for financing sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Programmes of Action for the least-developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

In that regard, I am of the view that it is imperative for us to be resolute in translating our political commitment into concrete action, while enhancing mutual trust, cooperation and assistance in order to collectively address our challenges. We must continue to adhere to the fundamental principles of the United Nations in resolving regional and international conflicts by peaceful means, while promoting development cooperation with a focus on implementing the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, the United Nations, which has a duty to encourage and assist Member States in implementing such measures, should improve its mechanisms and working methods to enable it to respond to challenges and carry out those duties effectively.

South-East Asia continues to enjoy peace and stability, making for an environment that is conducive not only to the socioeconomic development of the countries of the region but also to enhancing regional cooperation in the new era of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Community — post-31 December 2015 — as well as strengthening cooperation between ASEAN and its external partners, with the aim of further consolidating and advancing the ASEAN Community in accordance with its Vision 2025 initiative through our ASEAN-initiated frameworks. We hope that the international community, particularly ASEAN's dialogue partners and other external parties, will continue to support ASEAN and its central position in the evolving regional architecture.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic is proud and honoured to assume the chairship of ASEAN in 2016, the first year of the ASEAN Community. In that spirit, we have introduced the theme "Turning vision into reality for a dynamic ASEAN Community", aimed at realizing Vision 2025. The ASEAN summits, and the related summits concluded earlier this month, have adopted many important documents related to cooperation within ASEAN and between ASEAN and its external partners. All of that has contributed significantly to our common cause of maintaining and promoting peace, stability and cooperation in the region and the world at large, as well as of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Lao People's Democratic Republic takes this opportunity to express its sincere thanks and appreciation to the international community, particularly the ASEAN member States and dialogue partners, for the kind cooperation and support they have given our ASEAN chairship this year.

This has been the first year of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals. In that regard, I would commend the President on his choice for this session of the Assembly of the theme "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world", a theme that responds to our real situation. I believe that we have to deepen understanding of the SDGs at the national, regional and international levels in order to integrate them into our national development plans and mobilize sufficient resources for effectively implementing the 2030 Agenda. We must also ensure a peaceful, stable environment, which is a shared aspiration for humankind and consistent with the United Nations principles of peace, friendship and development cooperation, aimed at ensuring that we, the peoples, live together in peace and dignity.

Early this year, the Lao People's Democratic Republic held elections to the National Assembly, which subsequently approved a new Government. The Government has continued to pursue our policies on national development and has mainstreamed the SDGs into its eighth five-year national socioeconomic development plan for 2016 to 2020, its development strategy for 2025 and Vision 2030. We consider implementation of the SDGs to be an international obligation that will not only contribute to realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development but will also bring development benefits to the Lao People's Democratic Republic. To that end, our Government is focusing on achieving the goals of the aforementioned development initiatives, which include, among other things, working on green growth and sustainable development, maintaining steady economic growth, continuing to reduce poverty and graduating from least-developed-country status.

In addition to the 17 SDGs, the Lao Government has adopted a national, eighteenth SDG — keeping lives safe from unexploded ordnance (UXO). I myself,

together with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, formally launched the SDG on 7 September in Vientiane. Its targets are to ensure that residual UXO activities are undertaken by 2030 and all known UXO contamination is cleared in high-priority areas and all villages defined as poor; that annual casualties from UXO accidents are eliminated as far as possible; and that the needs of all identified UXO survivors and victims are met.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic is a least-developed and landlocked country that continues to face many challenges and obstacles in developing infrastructure and quality human resources, among other things, that require the continued support and assistance of the international community. I am confident that with the Lao Government's determination, coupled with the international community's continued cooperation and assistance, we will be able to achieve those goals.

Climate change and more frequent and severe natural disasters have affected the national development and livelihoods of peoples all over the world. That poses a major challenge that no single country alone is able to address. Recognizing the importance of this issue, the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has formally joined the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. I very much hope that the Paris Agreement will enter into force by the end of this year and will be effectively implemented. For its part, the Lao Government has submitted its nationally determined contributions and integrated climate change, natural disaster risk reduction and management into its national socioeconomic development plan.

Lessons from the past have shown that the use of armed forces to resolve conflicts, which occurred in different regions of the world, brings only enormous devastation to humankind, such as great losses in lives and property, resulting in poverty, hunger and other negative impacts. This leads to an escalation of crimes and terrorist attacks. Against that backdrop, the Lao People's Democratic Republic calls on the international community to demonstrate the political will to address conflicts in various parts of the world by peaceful means, which the Lao People's Democratic Republic has consistently supported.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic always hopes that the parties concerned will resolve the issue of Palestine by peaceful means, with a view to creating two independent States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic welcomes the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba, and expresses its strong hope that such relations will be further enhanced, leading to the lifting of the embargo against the Republic of Cuba in the near future.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that the United Nations must be further strengthened, especially in terms of its effectiveness in addressing important global issues. All States Members of the United Nations should extend full support and cooperation and fulfil their international obligations in order to address these enormous global challenges, and in particular to implement the SDGs in a timely and effective manner. The Lao People's Democratic Republic reiterates its firm commitment and determination to continue working closely with the international community to build a more secure, peaceful, just and prosperous world.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.*

## Address by Mr. Andrew Holness, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica.

*Mr. Andrew Holness, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President**: (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Andrew Holness, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Holness** (Jamaica): I am honoured to join fellow leaders at the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, which affords us an opportunity to undertake the most effective global response to the challenges for

which the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was elaborated.

I congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his assumption of the presidency for this session, and am particularly pleased that the representative of a small island developing State is presiding over our Assembly. I am confident that his deliberations during this session will translate into meaningful commitments and actions under his able leadership.

Let me thank the Secretary-General for his contribution to the work of the United Nations over the past 10 years. He is to be commended for his tireless efforts in guiding the Organization, allowing it to remain at the forefront of international dialogue, consensus-building and cooperation.

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September last year, we, as a global community, have committed ourselves to securing the well-being of all peoples. Jamaica is mindful, however, that for this outcome to be realized, national efforts must be complemented by global partnerships. Indeed, we are conscious that transforming our world is the responsibility of all of us — of every nation and every individual. Under my leadership, despite the challenges, we in Jamaica are fully committed and are laying the foundation for accelerated, sustained economic growth.

Like many other countries, our path towards sustainable development has been hindered by years of low growth, crippling national debt and high unemployment, which have been exacerbated by our vulnerability to natural hazards and other exogenous shocks. Consistent with the priorities of Vision 2030 Jamaica and the global Sustainable Development Goals, my Government is implementing strategies to achieve economic growth, job creation, security and poverty alleviation. Those are our overriding objectives for the next four years. We are forging stronger partnerships with our private sector and undertaking structural reforms to foster an enabling business environment, which will make Jamaica a more attractive destination for local and foreign direct investment. We are also resolute in our commitment to ensuring that economic activity is undertaken in a manner that not only protects and preserves our natural environment, but that also develops our most important asset — the people of Jamaica. We will also continue to develop a social protection network that is essential to safeguarding the welfare of the most vulnerable in our society.

While we pursue a self-reliant path, I must bring to the attention of the General Assembly a matter that requires international cooperation. Highly indebted middle-income countries (HIMIC) like Jamaica are poised for economic transition with the attainment of relatively high levels of health and education. However, in a climate of historically low economic growth, this potential is gravely threatened by our having to choose between debt repayment and catalytic growth spending.

Jamaica has no choice. Jamaica must repay its debts, and we are repaying our debts. However, the consequence of this is that no resources are available for the Government to make the kinds of public investment that stimulate economic growth. In addition, spending on critical issues, such as security — the absence of which negatively impacts growth — is compromised. In these circumstances, developing countries would previously be able to tap into development assistance that can be used for growth-inducing countercyclical investment in infrastructure, which in turn strengthens debt-repayment capacity. However, arbitrary classification, on the basis of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, precludes HIMIC countries from accessing such resources. The problem is that while GDP per capita gives an indication of average incomes, it says nothing about a country's stock of wealth, nor does it take into account the vulnerabilities that some countries face.

Furthermore, some HIMIC countries such as Jamaica have made deep structural and fiscal reforms to improve fiscal management and achieve debt sustainability, ensuring that we will never return to unsustainably high levels of debt. However, in the absence of an abundance of unused spare capacity in our economies, these reforms will not immediately kick-start the growth cycle. Instead, new investment needs to follow at a scale and velocity that are difficult to undertake without the full engagement of international development institutions. This creates the prospect of a HIMIC trap — a situation where countries are at the cusp of transitioning but are stalled and at risk of reversal.

The presumption that middle-income country status obviates the need for ongoing access to official development assistance and concessional financing is not supported by empirical evidence. The potential HIMIC trap threatens hard-won development gains and countries such as ours have for some time been highlighting this problem. Yet the prospect of a HIMIC

trap has not yet triggered a change in the mindset of those who preside over the decision-making process that directly influences our global, economic and financial outlook. I re-emphasize that a review of this broad categorization of countries, based solely on GDP per capita, must be undertaken, as this measure, in isolation, fails to fully and accurately take account of added vulnerabilities and levels of indebtedness. There are various other measures of development that should be taken into account.

Several years ago, the international community nobly responded to the problem of unsustainable debt in poor countries through the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative, guided by the principle that no poor country should face a debt burden that it cannot manage. We supported this then, and we support it now on a similar principle for highly indebted middle-income countries.

However, the time has come for the international community to similarly converge around a HIMIC initiative, underpinned by the principle that highly indebted countries that have undiversifiable structural vulnerabilities, such as small size or susceptibility to the effects of climate change, and that responsibly and faithfully service their debt should be facilitated with assistance in the form of investment, favourable trade, technology transfer, security cooperation and energy.

To qualify for inclusion in the HIMIC initiative, a country, in addition to being a highly indebted middle-income country, should have undiversifiable structural vulnerabilities and a demonstrated track record of commitment to economic, fiscal and social reform programmes supported by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The collective size of the problem is such that a HIMIC initiative would not burden the international system. However, the potential impact of assisting these countries in transitioning would put more countries in a position to make greater contributions to the international system in the near future.

Jamaica is pursuing reforms to enhance the efficiency of the public sector, improving its customer service delivery, pursuing economies of scale, reducing duplication and aligning the public sector towards enabling and facilitating economic growth and development. While we pursue reforms aimed at boosting fiscal sustainability and growth, we are also looking at innovative ways to match our financing needs with sustainable development objectives.

Jamaica will work with development partners to pursue debt-for-climate-change swaps. This holds the potential of providing bilateral and multilateral relief for climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives. Such a mechanism has the potential to provide fiscal relief while helping to unlock pledged climate financing to fund adaptation and mitigation initiatives. As a country vulnerable to climate, Jamaica will play its part to close the climate implementation gap, while at the same time addressing our debt overhang. This has the potential to be a ground-breaking approach.

Peace and security are a Sustainable Development Goal. They is often spoken about in the context of peace between States. However, peace within States is just as important. Jamaica, like much of the Caribbean and Central America, is challenged by crime. This has had a destructive impact on families — particularly poor families — deterred investment and discouraged businesses. In sections of Jamaica crime threatens the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Tackling crime is a priority for our Government. While the Jamaican Government will do its part, the common problem we face in our region requires deeper security cooperation.

The international community must also move with greater alacrity towards eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Jamaica is acutely aware of the destruction that can be wrought as a result of easy access to small arms and light weapons, particularly when in the possession of sophisticated networks of organized criminal groups. Our strategic location, which is extremely favourable for trade and logistics, also provides a potential transit point for illicit activities.

It is this reality that has defined and propelled our participation in a range of bilateral, regional and multilateral arrangements aimed at restricting the source, means and capabilities that have fuelled these dangerous relationships, made even more destructive through links to the drug trade. Jamaica has been a staunch supporter of the Arms Trade Treaty, and we are working towards its full and effective implementation. We call on all arms-exporting countries to abide by their legally binding obligations under the Treaty. Jamaica was honoured to have chaired the recently convened Sixth Biennial Meeting of States to consider

the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.

We need to effectively address the emerging crisis of the withdrawal of correspondent banking services from certain financial institutions in the Caribbean. De-risking threatens our economies. It tends to hinder our participation in the global financial system and in international trade, which in turn creates serious obstacles to our efforts to promote investment. We respect and have been complying with financial regulatory standards and working within a rules-based, multilateral trade and financial system. Trade represents 70 per cent of the Jamaican economy and de-risking measures therefore threaten our integration and economic viability. We therefore encourage our international partners to take an approach that establishes principles for ensuring inclusive development strategies based on a country's ability to engage in vibrant, dynamic international trade.

In the area of global trade, Jamaica realizes that the continued economic embargo of our sister Caribbean country, Cuba, is out of step with the recent actions that have been taken to re-establish diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States. We therefore urge that it be lifted as soon as possible.

The hallmark of any civilized society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. We must address the issue of preventing violence against them, particularly our women and children, as a priority. We must seek to empower our women to realize their full potential. Jamaica has a long track record of championing the rights of women and will continue to advocate for full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Nor can we leave our children behind. If they are to realize their full potential, they must be given the opportunity to live in an environment that is free from fear and violence. That resolve is what undergirds our support for the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children.

The international community must scale up cooperation in order to respond to the growing and deepening health crises that have gripped our world. Jamaica, like many other countries, continues to struggle with preventing and controlling the common risk factors associated with the prevalence of non-communicable and new and emerging diseases. The emerging and resurgent epidemics associated with the transnational movement of microbes such as Ebola, Zika and chikungunya represent a severe challenge for national budgets. The recently concluded high-level meeting on antimicrobial resistance and HIV/AIDS also highlighted another problem for the global health situation that must be halted if we are to ensure that our citizens have full and productive lives.

Another issue that demands continued cooperation at the global, regional and national levels is our response to climate change and the increasing occurrence of natural disasters, including extreme weather-related phenomena. Such events, increasingly spurred by man-made activity, continue to be a clear and present danger for many societies, particularly small island developing States. Recent experience has shown us that no country or group of countries can be considered to be beyond the reach of such events. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction provide us with a blueprint for action to ensure that our development efforts do not compromise the ability of future generations to enjoy a world in which their needs can be adequately met. I can assure the Assembly that Jamaica remains committed to the implementation of those agreements and will work to continue the effective implementation of the commitments they contain.

As the host country for the International Seabed Authority, we attach great importance to matters pertaining to the law of the sea. Jamaica supports the development of a legally binding international instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, and is actively participating in the negotiations on such an instrument.

Jamaica has had a long and fruitful association with the United Nations that we value greatly. We are firm in our commitment to multilateralism and the continued strengthening of the Organization. We stand on the threshold of a world of possibilities, a world in which all can be given the opportunity to realize their full potential and where every nation State can better provide for the well-being of its citizens. We must not just live up to that expectation; we must surpass it. At this seventy-first session of the Assembly, let us recommit to the noble ideals of this Organization and its Charter, and to achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Let us join together, in

the spirit of the national pledge of Jamaica, to advance the welfare of the whole human race.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Andrew Holness, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica, was escorted from the rostrum.*

### Address by Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands.

*Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Sogavare** (Solomon Islands): At this seventy-first session, it is indeed an honour to see a fellow Pacific islander elected for the first time as President of the General Assembly. Mr. Peter Thomson brings to the position qualities of experience, personality and leadership that are known in this Hall. Solomon Islands would like to assure him of our support and cooperation during his term in office, and we look forward to working with him on our common agenda as one of his Vice-Presidents.

Our appreciation goes to his predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, whose term in office coincided with the adoptions of three development frameworks — the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and their Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. President Lykketoft worked tirelessly to strengthen the role and authority of the General Assembly. He put in place an open, inclusive and transparent process for selecting the Secretary-General, and our new Secretary-General is expected to take up office in January 2017. For the first time in 70 years, I believe, the Assembly interacted with all the candidates for the position. We wish all of them the best in their bid for the position and leave an open invitation to the incoming Secretary-General to consider visiting the Hapi Isles.

Mr. Ban Ki-moon's tenure as Secretary-General comes to a close at the end of this year. We join others in paying tribute to his exemplary leadership of our Organization. Over the years, he has worked for the benefit of all and has been a voice of reason, particularly on the issue of climate change. He remains the first and only Secretary-General to visit Solomon Islands since we joined this body 38 years ago. It was also during his tenure that the United Nations country presence in Solomon Islands was upgraded. We have every confidence that his successor can further upgrade that presence to the status of a full-fledged country office. We remain steadfast in our commitment to working with the Secretary-General during the remaining four months of his term and thank him for his sterling service to Solomon Islands and humankind.

Last year was one of agreements and the adoption of frameworks; this year must be about operationalizing the agreements and implementing the frameworks. In that regard, Solomon Islands welcomes the theme of this session, "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world". We commend the President for putting together an SDG implementation team in his Office and look forward to working with him on unlocking the means of implementation so as to realize full and effective implementation of the SDGs. I am indeed proud to say that Solomon Islands has begun the work of domesticating the Sustainable Development Goals by integrating them into our national development strategy for 2016 to 2035, which provides a clear, coherent and harmonized whole-of-Government approach to delivering on our national policies and programmes.

The high-level meetings held this week to address the issue of large movements of refugees and migrants were also an opportunity to seriously examine the issue of climate-displaced populations and environmental migrants. The international community must do more by establishing a global mechanism to help small island developing States (SIDS) manage populations displaced by climate change. The treaties in effect are inadequate to addressing the issue of people forced out by climate change. We call for a legal framework designed to address and protect the rights of forced climate migrants and to compensate populations affected by climate change for the loss of their livelihoods.

Solomon Islands is the current Chair of the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF), which is a bold attempt to address the issues of sustainable development through a structured and inclusive approach, under the tripartite leadership of Government, the private sector and civil society. The PIDF offers the Pacific island countries a seamless link to the high-level political forum processes envisaged under "The future we want".

Solomon Islands welcomes the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and I would like to congratulate the French presidency of the 2015 Paris Climate Conference for its leadership in helping to restore trust and confidence in the multilateral system. We now have the Paris Agreement, with legally binding obligations to implement the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). I am pleased to announce that Solomon Islands has ratified the Agreement and submitted its instrument of ratification two days ago. We are all duty-bound to strengthen the Agreement and make it work.

However, we remain concerned about the fact that ambitions under the Paris Agreement remain alarmingly low if we are to limit warming to well below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. We appeal to developed countries to scale up the ambition of their intended nationally determined contributions so as to protect the integrity of the Paris Agreement. We hope that in Marrakech we will be able to do more to establish the Agreement on firmer foundations by taking concrete steps to close the pre-2020 ambition gap. We therefore urge countries that have not ratified the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol to do so as soon as possible.

I also welcome the decision taken in December by the parties to the Montreal Protocol to phase down the production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons under the treaty. We hope that big emitters and industrial countries will see the urgency of preventing runaway climate change and will ratify the Paris Agreement to enable its entry into force as soon as possible.

This year, scientists reported that five of our islands had been claimed by the sea as a result of human-induced sea-level rise, while six others were severely eroded. Accelerating sea-level rise and ocean acidification continue to be serious concerns for us. Delaying action on tackling climate change comes at a cost, and we in the SIDS and least-developed countries are unnecessarily put in harm's way by the lack of commitment on the part of some.

Solomon Islands welcomes and supports the initiative of the Moroccan presidency of the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in convening a facilitative dialogue on unlocking the means of implementation to operationalize the Paris Agreement. We also welcome the decision of the Green Climate Fund to disburse $2.5 billion by December 2016. Solomon Islands is in the midst of securing financing from the Fund for one of our hydropower projects. We continue to be grateful to partners such as Japan, the United Arab Emirates, Italy and the Republic of China for their ongoing renewable energy assistance to Solomon Islands.

I am pleased to announce that Solomon Islands has just deployed five police officers for United Nations peacekeeping duties. We intend to step up our efforts to meet our global responsibility and send more officers to other missions abroad in the near future. On the regional front, Solomon Islands would like to express its gratitude to all 15 members of the Pacific Islands Forum, including Australia and New Zealand, for their steadfast partnership and commitment to Solomon Islands over the past 13 years. The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) is winding down and will withdraw in June 2017. Solomon Islands is engaging with various partners, including Australia and New Zealand, on post-RAMSI arrangements.

Solomon Islands remains committed to Sustainable Development Goal 16. We have conducted national reconciliation outreach and would like to thank the United Nations for making peacebuilding funds available for use in Solomon Islands. We are currently undertaking legislative and land reforms, including nation-building economic investments. We are committed to unifying our culturally richly diverse population.

On the issue of the oceans, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that Solomon Islands is developing a national ocean governance framework that will rationalize and enhance coordination and the implementation of all ocean-related legislation. Solomon Islands has some of the world's most diverse marine species and is a member of the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI). The Initiative affords us a coordinated approach to marine and coastal management with Government leadership and a focus on people-centred natural-resource management We are mindful of the growing global attention to the oceans and welcome the Assembly's decision to convene a United Nations conference on oceans and seas next

year. Solomon Islands also supports the establishment of a new agreement to deal with biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

There is no single ocean entry point in the multilateral system, and I call for the establishment of a world ocean authority. Such an authority would coordinate all ocean-related treaties, entities and programmes, and move beyond the current sectoral approach to a single holistic and comprehensive framework.

Fisheries contribute significantly to the economies of the Pacific. Tuna has served to integrate the economies of the Pacific into global markets. This year the Pacific small island developing States (SIDS) celebrated Tuna Day here at the United Nations. I hope that it becomes an annual event, and we will explore the possibility of bringing a draft resolution to the General Assembly to declare 2 May as World Tuna Day.

Solomon Islands is a party to the Nauru Agreement on Cooperation in the Management of Fisheries of Common Interest. We believe in a rights-based approach to fisheries management that guarantees resource owners their fair share of the benefits. The Vessel Day Scheme is one such rights-based mechanism. It has significantly increased the economic returns from our tuna.

I am pleased to note that one of Solomon Islands' four continental-shelf claims submitted to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf is now awaiting decision by the Commission. The joint claim of the Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands to the Ontong Java Plateau was considered by a subcommission in August. Solomon Islands would like to acknowledge the efforts of the joint delegation and thank the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for its assistance from its trust fund. We encourage all who are blessed with resources to contribute to the fund. I also thank the Commonwealth Secretariat for the technical support rendered to the joint delegation, and hope that similar support can be extended to the remaining claims.

Solomon Islands recognizes the fundamental rights of the Republic of China on Taiwan and its 23 million people to participate meaningfully in the United Nations specialized agencies. Solomon Islands finds Taiwan's limited and restricted participation with the World Health Organization system regrettable, especially at a time when the spread of infectious diseases is impacting our children, and we need everyone to assist. We call for Taiwan's open and free access to all World Health Organization meetings. Similarly, Taiwan remains unjustly on the fringes of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) decision-making processes. Taiwan manages more than 1 million flights, equalling 58 million passengers, through the Taipei Flight Information Region. We also call for Taiwan's predictable and certain participation in ICAO meetings. There have always been two political systems along the Taiwan Strait. The reality is that the world works with one and turns a blind eye to the other. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for all hands on deck. Let us put the interests of humankind first and work with all, including Taiwan.

The year 2016 is Solomon Islands' second year as Chair of the five-member Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG). The Group has established the subregional Humanitarian and Emergency Response Coordination Centre so as to be able to respond to disasters in our subregion. The increasing occurrence of severe tropical cyclones requires timely international and regional responses in order to complement nationally led disaster-management responses. The Group recently concluded negotiations on a new MSG trade agreement. The new agreement, once signed by the five States, will deepen and tighten economic integration among the member States. The Group continues to follow the question of New Caledonia, which is on the United Nations agenda. We wish the people of New Caledonia all the best as they prepare to decide on their political future in 2018.

Solomon Islands reaffirms its support for the inalienable right of the people of the territory of French Polynesia to self-determination, pursuant to the annual resolutions of the General Assembly, beginning in 2013 (resolution 67/265). Solomon Islands continues to request the Administrative Power to work and cooperate with the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization on the question of French Polynesia, and we hope that the Special Committee will visit the territory soon.

Solomon Islands is gravely concerned about the human rights violations against Melanesians in West Papua. Human rights violations in West Papua and West Papua's pursuit of self-determination are two sides of the same coin. The many reports of human rights violations in West Papua corroborate the practice

of direct violations of human rights by Indonesia in its attempts to smother any form of opposition.

The principle of sovereignty is paramount in any institution whose core rationale is the respect for sovereignty. If, however, the justification of sovereignty rests on a series of decisions that are questionable, then there is a case to challenge the legality of the argument for sovereignty, as outlined in the Agreement signed in New York on 15 August 1962 and the Act of Free Choice. Solomon Islands adds its voice to those of other Member States and civil-society organizations that are concerned about human rights violations in the Papua and West Papua regions of Indonesia. As the Chair of the MSG, which includes Indonesia as an associate member and the United Liberation Movement of West Papua as an observer, Solomon Islands affirms the need for constructive engagement with Indonesia and looks forward to cooperating with Indonesia to address the violations of human rights in West Papua.

Solomon Islands welcomes the restoration of relations between Cuba and the United States of America. Solomon Islands continues to call on its friend and partner the United States of America to work towards completely lifting the embargo. On South-South cooperation, I would like to register my appreciation to Cuba for the medical scholarships offered to our students, and I am pleased to see the growing number of graduates returning to serve our people.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains a source of guidance and inspiration on gender equality and gender empowerment. Solomon Islands remains committed to the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action, which should enable the realization of gender goals and targets under the Sustainable Development Goals. In April of this year, my Government welcomed the entry into force of the Family Protection Act. My Government's continued legal-reform programme will result in laws that complement the functions of the Family Protection Act.

A reform of the Security Council remains elusive. We urge the Assembly to build on the work carried out at the previous session to make the Council more accountable, representative and transparent. Solomon Islands and fellow SIDS continue to seek a dedicated seat for SIDS in the non-permanent-seat category in the Council.

In conclusion, the journey to implement the SDGs has begun. The Assembly will be measured by our success in unlocking the means, tools and resources to transform our peoples' lives and ensure them a sustainable future. Let us not fail our people.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted from the rostrum.*

### Address by Mr. Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

*Mr. Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Mosisili** (Lesotho): May I take this opportunity to congratulate the President on his well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. His distinguished career, experience and impeccable credentials assure us of a successful session. Let me hasten to pledge my delegation's full support and cooperation to the President during his term of office. I also wish to commend his predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for his outstanding leadership during the previous session.

Similar accolades go to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, under whose leadership the Organization continues to discharge its mandate with honour and commendable zeal. We may recall that, under his stewardship, the United Nations dealt with several challenges, most of which were handled with great success. As we prepare to bid him farewell, we do so with pride, as he has indeed discharged his responsibilities with honour and dignity. He will leave an indelible footprint, and his successor will follow in his footsteps, continuing the good work done.

The seventy-first session of the General Assembly comes at a time when the United Nations as an Organization has made significant strides in addressing many of the serious challenges facing the international community. It is to the credit of the United Nations that, since the end of the Second World War, no world-wide conflict has occurred, with the exception of localized skirmishes in various parts of the globe. The international community has enjoyed the longest period of sustained peace and development in modern history.

The intractable conflicts in the Middle East and Africa and the tension on the Korean peninsula and in other parts of Asia, as well as the biggest global refugee problem since the Second World War, are some of the challenges facing the United Nations and the world today. Terrorism continues to rear its ugly head — in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia — with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and other terrorist entities indiscriminately causing great damage to property and the needless loss of lives. World security is indivisible. Threats of conflict, terrorism and famine in one part of the world will always have debilitating repercussions everywhere — the case in point being the influx of refugees from Africa, the Middle East and Asia into Western Europe.

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) last year and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change adopted at the recent Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change are notable landmarks that have cemented the role of the United Nations as the only forum at which collective diplomacy can bear fruit.

The theme chosen for the current session, namely, "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world", is most relevant and appropriate at this time when humankind is tottering on a precipice resulting from hunger, poverty, disease and the adverse consequences of climate change. The theme highlights the collective desire of the United Nations to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions. As we may recall, the overriding message of the 2030 Agenda is to leave no one behind.

The unique and special challenges faced by the least-developed countries, the landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States, as well as those emerging from conflicts, should be paramount in our minds as we consider strategies and steps to be taken to bring the Sustainable Development Goals to fruition. We believe that the inclusion of all stakeholders, especially women and youth, in programmatic and results-oriented action will bring about fundamental changes in the livelihoods and well-being of our societies. In Lesotho women constitute a significant majority of the population and are the backbone of our rural communities. Their human-resource potential must not be underestimated. It is for that reason that we have promulgated laws that allow them access to land, credit and the resources necessary for their unfettered engagement in community activity.

Young people are always at the receiving end of an economic downturn, anytime one occurs. Yet they are endowed with intellect, energy and the exuberance of youth, which can be harnessed for development in the long term. In line with the SDGs, we have undertaken to capacitate youth-owned micro, small and medium-sized enterprises so that they can acquire appropriate skills that will help them create jobs and take advantage of international markets already at their disposal. Special attention is being given to small and medium-sized enterprises, as they form an integral part of industry and are potential employers for unskilled and semi-skilled labour. It is also a point of entry for young entrepreneurs into the manufacturing and services sectors. In Lesotho's coalition agreement, we have committed to supporting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises through appropriate regulatory policies and access to finance.

The transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the SDGs has not been difficult, as there are many synergies and complementarities between the two programmes. We are also aware of the synergies that exist between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 and the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan of the Southern African Development Community. For our part in Lesotho, we have already begun a process to ensure that the three Agendas are mainstreamed into our national policies and plans. With our limited domestic resources, we are looking for innovative ways of pursuing our development priorities and aligning them to the global, continental and regional agendas. To that end, Lesotho has been working with the United Nations country office to conduct sensitization workshops on the SDGs. So far, we have conducted such workshops for the private sector, civil society and members of Parliament. We are in the process of reviewing our national strategic development plan so as

to align it fully with the 2030 Agenda and regional and continental development plans.

We are convinced that a private-sector-led growth strategy that ensures that that sector contributes to economic growth, job creation, poverty alleviation and sustainable development is vital for competition, the expansion of trade and investment opportunities. Sustainable Development Goal 9, which enjoins us to "build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation", recognizes the importance of infrastructure, industrialization and technology for the progress and development of countries like Lesotho.

Economic development cannot be sustainable without a conscious effort to protect the environment. The adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2015 is another milestone in the global effort to safeguard and promote humankind's continuing progress and survival. We welcome the pledges by developed countries to make resources available for the Green Climate Fund.

The threats posed by underdevelopment, climate change and HIV/AIDS have pricked the conscience of humankind for many years. Lesotho has adopted an innovative, indigenous leadership programme that seeks to galvanize the collective wisdom of all levels of leadership to join in the fight against HIV/AIDS in particular, and to ensure that the health delivery system is affordable, accessible and effective. The programme was launched by His Majesty King Letsie III on 25 August. We also launched a test-and-treat programme in April and revived the National AIDS Commission. Those are just a few of the initiatives that the Government of Lesotho has taken to curb new infections, maternal deaths and new incidences of tuberculosis.

We recognize the role of disarmament in the maintenance of international peace and security, and Lesotho remains fully committed to the implementation of the provisions of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), aimed at preventing the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. We therefore call upon all the nuclear-weapon States to start making deep cuts in their current nuclear-weapon stockpiles, with the ultimate aim of finally eliminating them altogether. The African Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone Treaty, which entered into force in July 2009, is a clear demonstration of the continent's desire for peace and genuine nuclear disarmament.

We should all remain true to the principle of the responsibility to protect, which the General Assembly unanimously adopted less than a decade ago. That principle imposes upon us the responsibility to create conditions of peace, security and harmony, while leaving no room for hostility, violence or aggression. We therefore remain committed to supporting actions by the Security Council that include authorization for military intervention where necessary. Our understanding is that the principles in international law on the non-use of force in international relations, respect for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of States, as well as non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, remain paramount and sacrosanct in all instances. We commend the Security Council for its work undertaken in keeping with those principles throughout the years.

For that reason, I wish to reiterate Lesotho's well-known position on the reform of the Security Council, in line with the established position of the African Union, as articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus. We strongly urge that the very important issue of Security Council reform should not be turned into a joke. The sooner it is concluded, the better for humankind and for peace in the world.

We furthermore reiterate our position on the one-China policy, a position that will ensure that the people of China are not dismembered and huddled into imaginary geographic segments.

The right to self-determination and independence is a God-given right that cannot be taken away arbitrarily. It is for that reason that we have never wavered in our support for the independence of the people of Western Sahara. We call upon the United Nations to assist the Secretary-General in resuscitating the negotiations on the holding of a referendum in Western Sahara, so as to determine the will of the Saharawi people. We also urge the Kingdom of Morocco to support the process, so as to bring a lasting solution to the matter and facilitate the return of Morocco to its rightful place in the African Union family.

By the same token, the plight of the Palestinian people has been on the international community's agenda for far too long. We call for a new initiative that will buttress all efforts aimed at a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and that of Palestine existing

side by side in peace. A fresh initiative is required to restart the process that produced the Oslo Accords and bring an end to the suffering of the communities concerned, which have endured aggression for more than 60 years. Surely, a permanent resolution of that seeming impasse is now overdue and urgent for the benefit of the neighbouring countries as well and the world at large.

As I conclude, let me express our hope and expectation that in the next decade, the efforts of the United Nations aimed at accelerating the pace of economic development on a global scale will begin to show tangible results. Let us work together to create a world where the foundations of world peace and security will continue to rest, not on the absence of war but on the international principles of non-aggression, the non-use of force in inter-State relations and the peaceful resolution of disputes, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We will, hopefully, continue to consolidate the foundations of a world where the true definition of peace will manifest itself in harmonious relations among peoples and in mutual respect and understanding between nations. We will continue to build prosperity for our peoples on the basis of the agreed principles embodied in the SDGs, which represent a pragmatic and visionary programme that seeks to free humankind from the bondage of hunger and poverty. We will ultimately embrace the need to allow reason to prevail over might. That is the future of our dreams — the future that we owe to posterity.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted from the rostrum.*

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*